

Psalm 28:1-2

Dear Friends in Christ,

I don't know the origin of the insight, but it's one that could probably be made by any loving parent: "You may explain to a child all the medical reasons why he or she must have a shot in the arm, but when the nurse gets ready to plunge that needle into their arm they run to Mommy. Comfort comes not in always knowing the reason why, but in knowing the comforter."

You might remember the story about three men who were discussing the correct posture for prayer. The first said the correct posture was to be "on one's knees with the head bowed in reverence to God." The second said it was to be "standing with arms stretched upward and head raised, looking into the heavens and speaking face to face with God." The third said, "I know nothing about these positions, but I do know this: the finest praying I've ever done was upside down in a well!" No doubt!

When everything around us falls apart; when all our plans start to crumble and every effort to fix them fails; when the reality hits that human intervention cannot help us . . . well . . . who do we run to? Let's take a look at . . .

THE MEANING OF A CRY FROM A CHILD OF GOD

I. Reminds Us that There Are Moments of Fear.

In our text, David cries out: "To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit." It's a frightening thought, isn't it? *If God doesn't hear me is like being a dead person.* Well, there are those moments of fear when we think that God is not listening. Luther wrote in *The Large Catechism*:

This should be kept in mind above all things so that you may silence and repel thoughts which would prevent or deter us from praying, as though it made no great difference if we do not pray, or as though prayer were commanded for those who are holier and in better favor with God than we are. Indeed, the human heart is by nature so desperately wicked that it always flees from God, thinking that he neither wants nor cares for our prayers because we are sinners and have merited nothing but wrath. (Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 421.10)

It's the statement, "as though prayer were commanded for those who are holier and in better favor with God than we are..." I find quite interesting. I have mentioned on several occasions a brother or sister who saw it that way, and one in particular where a Christian brother asked for prayer because "a pastor is in a better position with *the man upstairs*." Well, of course he isn't and I've always wondered what God thinks about that description of Him: *the man upstairs*.

And there are those moments when we might cry out as Job did: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him." (Job. 23:8-9) Is God there? Is He listening? Does He care?

II. Points to a Personal Relationship.

And so, David says, "Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary." (v. 2) The meaning of a cry from a child of God is that it points to a personal relationship. God knows David and David knows God. It's personal. David says, "my voice," "I cry," "I lift up my hands." David belongs to God and he is God's friend.

In his Epistle James writes, "and Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness' - and he was called a friend of God." (Jms. 2:23) We know the love of God in Christ and we are known by Him, therefore we are His friends.

And we are His righteous people, not because we are in and of ourselves righteous, but because, as Paul writes, "...the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:21a & 24) We belong to God. We're His!

And so, as a child runs to its mother we run to God. We are identified as His. Listen to these words from Psalm 34:

The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry...
When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all... none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.
(Ps. 34:15, 17-19)

III. Presupposes Pity and Allows Us to Notify God of Our Need.

There is much to consider in those words of Psalm 34; not only a personal relationship but they presuppose pity and allow us to notify God of our need: "The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry." He has pity on us and definitely hears our cries.

The fact that the Lord's children cry out to Him is a reminder that we are still living in a fallen and horribly troubled world. And that's an understatement! God does not take that away. Everyone here journeys through the pains, the sorrows, the stomach churning and teary eyed moments of life. We hurt, we live with disappointments and regrets, we wonder when and where it will all end. But Psalm 34 states, "The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit." The "saving" lifts us to eternal life!

And let's honestly face the reality: The troubles of life not only remind us of what this world is but moves us to do what God's Word calls us to do: "...seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." (Col. 2:1,2) And, dear friends, if any of us find that too negative and too much of an interference with our earthly thinking and goals, then we had better examine our understanding of Christ's mission for our lives. It's what the angel said to Joseph concerning the birth of Christ: "...you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21)

Here it is; the old and familiar: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:26) That's the goal: eternal life! Our greatest need is that the Lord keep us focused on the eternal Kingdom won for us through His precious blood! Of all the crying out we do, our most fervent crying is for God to hold us dear to Him and to do what it takes so that, after our last breath, we will enter into His unending love and presence!

So when the troubles of life knock us around remember this: "For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly..." (Ps. 138:6) He hears our cries. And remember this: "...though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved (and will be grieved) by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith (our faith will be tested)...may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ...(for you are) obtaining the goal of your faith (the goal, the 'why' we are children of God), the salvation of (our) souls." (I Pet. 1:6,7,9)

In a Wednesday evening sermon from a while back I talked about an ancient form of punishment where a prisoner was placed in a very, very narrow cell. The door was solid, except for a small opening. On the one side of the opening guards were assigned to keep a constant watch, 24/7, on the prisoner. No matter what the prisoner did, he could not escape the constant watch of the guards. There was no hiding place. Can you imagine that? Never being able to escape that kind of presence?

God watches over us constantly. But we're not His prisoners. We're His beloved children. It takes us back to those comforting words: "...I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me." (Is. 49:15b) It's what David said in the 139th Psalm: "Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether." (v. 4) That's the Presence we want. The One who understands the meaning of our cries; the One who marched to the cross and out of a tomb so we would have Real Life - Everlasting! Jesus. As John writes, "He will wipe every tear from (our) eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4) That's where The Meaning of a Cry from a Child of God takes us.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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“The Meaning of a Cry from a Child of God”

- I. Reminds Us that There Are Moments of Fear.
- II. Points to a Personal Relationship.
- III. Presupposes Pity and Allows Us to Notify God of Our Need.

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